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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 000568

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP, AF A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/E  
NSC FOR MGA VIN AND CHUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
DEPT PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/13/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [ICC](#) [SA](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: COURTSHIP OF SAUDIS PAYING DIVIDENDS FOR SUDAN

REF: A. RIYADH 789  
[B](#). RIYADH 456  
[C](#). NDJAMENA 102

Classified By: CDA David Rundell for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#). (C) KEY POINTS

-- A recent diplomatic offensive in Riyadh by the Sudanese now yields benefits in public and private support.

-- Saudi officials publicly greeted President Omar al-Bashir April 1 as he made a single day Umrah pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, lending an air of official weight to an otherwise religious visit.

-- Reportedly, Sudan has secured aid commitments from sources within Saudi Arabia, making up for the March NGO expulsion.

[2](#). (C) COMMENT:

-- STABILITY, STABILITY, STABILITY: The Saudis' interest in Sudan is pragmatic, as instability in Sudan can lead to instability at home. First, the Saudis invest in Sudan not just for financial gain, but as a strategic path to future food security. Second, over one million Sudanese live in the Kingdom, and some Saudis trace their ancestry to Sudan. The Saudi government is unlikely to risk antagonizing this large constituency which adamantly supports President Bashir and vehemently opposes the ICC warrant.

-- DONATION CONFIDENTIAL: The Saudis hold closely the amounts of assistance they provide to other countries. In a notable exception, the SAG publicly announced aid to Gaza Palestinians in the face of public outrage, although this was portrayed as a donation from individual royals. Many Saudis criticize foreign aid and believe the money could be better spent at home. Aid to Sudan would likely flow through the Saudi Red Crescent, or possibly other mechanisms such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference or Islamic Development Bank. However, the exact figures will likely remain secret.

-- THE MISBAHA ONLY HAS 99 BEADS: An execution of the ICC arrest warrant would likely elicit vocal opposition from the Saudis. They view themselves as already surrounded by diplomatic headaches, a list to which Sudan only adds. Pakistan, Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq and Yemen require the SAG's full attention, not to mention the Iran-Syria-Lebanon nexus. Volatility among Bahrain's Shi'a literally hits close to home. The Saudis would likely welcome any development that stabilizes Sudan and subtracts it from their list of concerns.

END KEY POINTS AND COMMENT

[3](#). (C) SUMMARY: Since the March 4 announcement of the ICC

arrest warrant, the Sudanese have dramatically increased their presence in front of high-ranking Saudis. Sudanese Presidential Advisor Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismael landed in Riyadh around March 7, staying for over a week and meeting with Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal (Ref B). Soon after, Vice President Ali Othman Taha and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Karti visited Riyadh, calling on King Abdallah. The payoff has come in three forms: public support, private assurances of increased aid, and the hosting of Bashir for the Umrah pilgrimage.

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SEEKING, AND GETTING, SUPPORT  
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14. (SBU) BASHIR LANDS IN SAUDI: In a brief yet significant April 1 visit, Bashir traveled directly from Doha to Jeddah, continuing to Mecca where he performed the Umrah pilgrimage. The SAG did not announce his visit in advance. However, several mid-ranking Saudi officials greeted Bashir during his trip. Jeddah mayor Prince Misha'al bin Majed bin Abdalaziz met Bashir as he landed in Jeddah, with photos of the pair

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appearing in local papers. Saudi Press Agency released a short statement from Mecca, noting but not naming the "number of senior officials" who received Bashir at the city's Holy Mosque.

15. (C) ASSISTANCE INCREASE: Scattered reports have indicated that the Saudis are increasing assistance to Sudan and Darfur, though the Saudis themselves have not announced any increase. Sporadic reports have come from Sudanese press sources, including one unattributed (and unlikely) claim that investment projects worth US \$4 billion are under review by Sudan's Jeddah Consulate (Sudanese Media Center, April 9). The following local reports provide more reliable detail:

-- March 24 Jeddah-based Okaz newspaper published an interview with Sudanese Interior Minister Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid where he stated that a high-level Saudi security delegation would visit Khartoum in April, in a revival of agreements signed in 2005. He added that Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef approved the visit which would focus on terrorism, organized crime and money laundering.

-- April 3 the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) announced a plan to increase aid to Darfur, according to a press report covering a conference of OIC aid ministers in Libya.

-- April 10 the Saudi Press Agency announced that the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank approved \$12.6 million to finance a water harvesting project and another \$19.5 million for a cotton project.

16. (S/NF) CONFIRMATION: A Riyadh-based Egyptian diplomat confirmed the increase in aid, but not the specifics. The diplomat cited a message from the Egyptian Embassy in Khartoum which stated that two unnamed organizations from within Saudi Arabia had agreed to provide humanitarian assistance. The diplomat added that Cairo had also asked the Saudis to increase aid, reading directly from a document carrying this message.

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MORE VIEWS ON SUDAN  
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17. (C) DQ RALLY: The night of March 5, the day after the ICC announcement, a large group of enthusiastic Sudanese congregated at their Riyadh Embassy, just steps from the U.S. Embassy. The raucous gathering came as close to a demonstration as one sees in Saudi Arabia, and speakers could be heard across the Diplomatic Quarter (DQ). In a rare move, police allowed a large number of Sudanese onto the DQ and

stood by during their "rally." A British diplomat attempted to enter and observe, but police turned him away.

¶8. (S/NF) AND OF COURSE, IRAN: In late February, a Sudanese diplomat shared that Sudan fully backed the Saudis in the face of a growing threat from Iran. He said his government feared Iran's growing presence, explaining how there were no Shi'a in his country twenty years ago - but you can find them today. He also noted Saudi Arabia's many investments in Sudan, pointing out food security as a key issue.

¶9. (S) VIEW FROM THE CHADIAN EMBASSY: The Charge d'Affaires of Riyadh's Chadian Embassy declined to delve into the Saudi-Sudan fray in a recent meeting. The Chadian CDA, Dr. Tahir Annadif Khatir (protect), ducked a query about the Saudi Ambassador to Chad (Ref C). Discussing Saudi aid, he doubtfully asked if the Saudis would contribute more to Darfur. On the Doha process, he expressed comfort in (Justice and Equality Movement leader) Dr. Khalil Ibrahim's ability to represent rebel factions, and commended the USG designation of a special envoy for Sudan. He emphasized his government's principle goal of repatriating the 200,000 Sudanese refugees currently in eastern Chad.

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